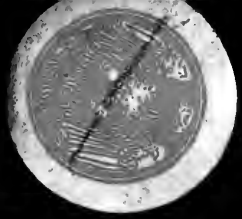

TOWARD SUNSET

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

FRANK H. STAUFFER

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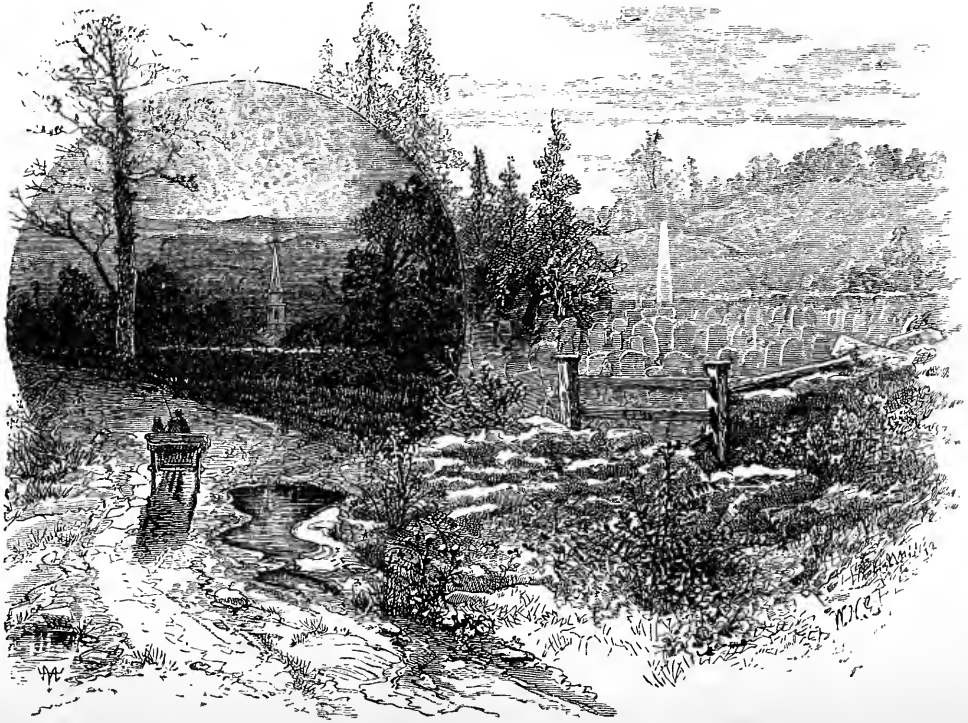

[*Frontispiece.*] "TOWARD SUNSET."

TOWARD SUNSET,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

"Mere Amber-Beads at Random Strung."

BY

FRANK H. STAUFFER,

AUTHOR OF "DORLAN THE SCOUT," "NAMELESS NAN," "MISSIONARY MADGE," "FANCHET THE FAWN," "SACRIFICING HER FORTUNE," ETC., ETC.

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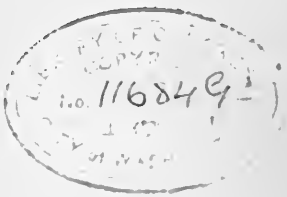

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FRANK H. STAUFFER,
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There breathes no being but has some pretence
To that fine instinct called poetic sense.—HOLMES.

These poems appeared in the various magazines and newspapers of the country, and were composed in odd moments stolen from the arduous duties of daily journalism.

The author now collects and publishes them merely to please himself and

HIS TWO LITTLE CHILDREN,

FRANK AND ETTA,

AND TO THEM HE FONDLY

DEDICATES THE VOLUME.

He is sure of *their* appreciation, which will make amends, to a very large extent, for any want of appreciation others may exhibit.

REESEVILLE, PA., Oct. 3, 1876.

*

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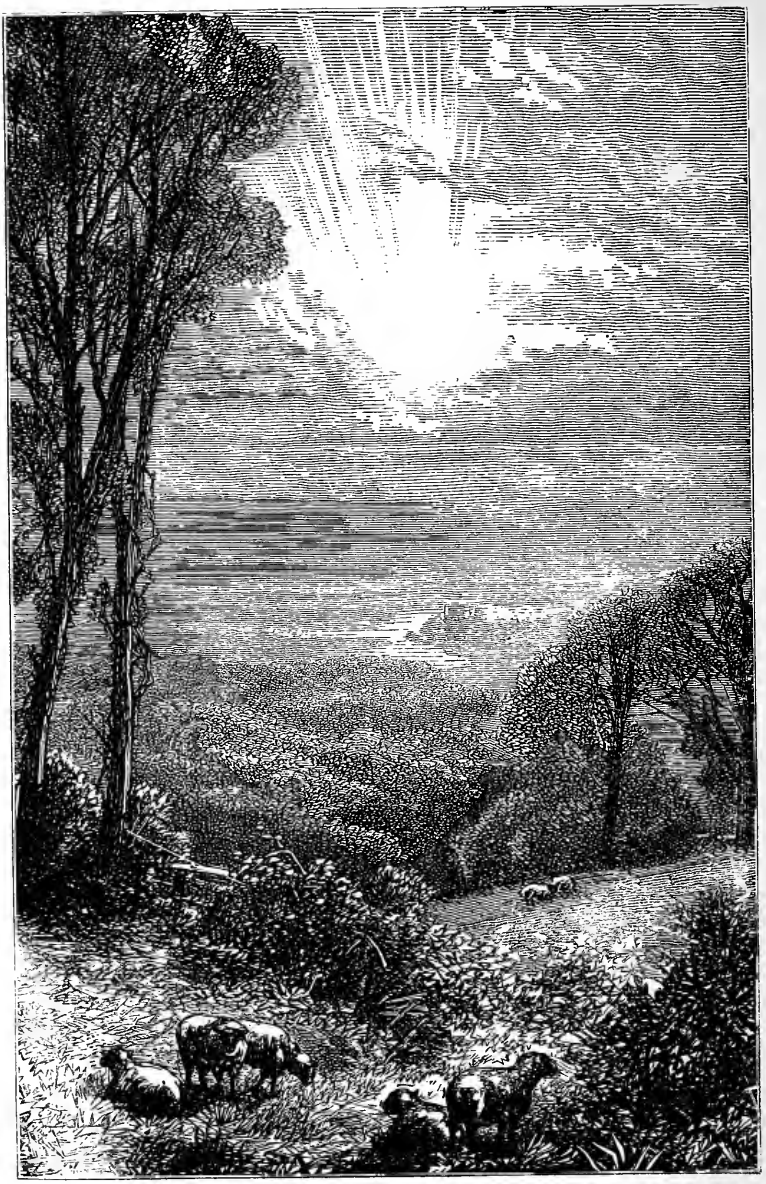


"The sun is sinking in the west,
Each hill-top wears a golden crest,
And valleys in deep shadows rest."

TOWARD SUNSET,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

TOWARD SUNSET.

The traveler trudges o'er the road;
His bundle seems like quite a load;
The thoughts of home his footsteps goad.

No need for him the way to ask;
He holds his staff with tighter grasp
For fresh installments of his task.

No longer heats of noon descend;
Onward his footsteps slowly tend;
He knows his journey soon will end.

The sun is sinking in the west,
Each hill-top wears a golden crest,
And valleys in deep shadows rest.

The crows are cawing in the woods,
The waning day the coppice floods,
The gath'ring twilight deeper broods.

The sheep are bleating on the slope,
The frogs amid the marshes croak,
The mill keeps up its tireless stroke.

The plow-horse rubs against his mate,
The cows are pushing through the gate,
Where, with their pails, the milk-maids wait.

The table spread with frugal meal,
The farm-house bell rings out its peal—
Its echoes o'er the hillsides steal.

The welcome sound the traveler hears—
His lagging step it sweetly cheers,
And takes him back to boyhood's years.

The homestead roof is dimly seen
Amid a waving sea of green;
The past seems like some fading dream.

He briskly climbs the winding hill;
His eyes with beams of gladness fill,
With newer life his pulses thrill.

Toward Sunset! Toward Home!
Ah! never more his feet shall roam—
A father's love has bid him come!

Hearts no longer wait nor yearn,
And words and looks with fervor burn
To greet the prodigal's return.

No taunts about what might have been !
No taunts about his shame nor sin !
For all is now forgiven him !

Life is but a pilgrimage at best,
Until its sun sets in the west
And tired souls at last find rest.

Old age creeps on us unaware,
We stagger with a load of care,
Our faces lines of trouble wear.

We break the vows that we have made,
We hug delusions till they fade,
We mourn o'er confidence betrayed.

Ambitions miss their lofty aim,
Pleasure lures with phantom flame,
Sweets turn to gall and joys to shame.

The world turns out to be a cheat—
Because we walk with devious feet,
And choose the bitter for the sweet.

Tired, foot-sore, friendless, and alone,
We sigh for lasting joys to come,
And turn our footsteps toward home.

As life thus "lessens on the lee"
Our Father's House by Faith we see
Through atonement made on Calvary.

O eyes, grow dim! Shake, palsied hands!
O faster fall, ye ebbing sands!
Come nearer, O ye shining lands!

'Tis nothing—all we here endure;
Our Father's Promises are Sure,
Our Home is with the Good and Pure!

Pain is little: Death is less—
Nay, but the gate to Happiness!
Thy name, Dear Lord, for this I bless!

Toward Sunset! Toward Home!
Life's Pilgrimage is almost done—
A Loving Father bids me come!

Death's Valley! But a darken'd line:
Eternal Hills beyond it shine!
There is the Saviour's Home, and mine!

THE BELLS OF ST. JOSEPH.

HER bells are ringing gently on the air,
Breathing of worshipfulness and prayer,
Calling us from worldly vanities away—
Some babe is to be christened there to-day.

Her bells are pealing gayly on the air,
Waking joyful echoes everywhere;

Through doors and gateways stream the young and gay—
Some girl is to be married there to-day.

Her bells are tolling sadly on the air,
Though the morning is so bright and fair;
The sexton throws up the clods of clay—
Some one is to be buried there to-day.

Her bells are ringing daily on the air,
Three eras marking in our life of care;
Twice they rang for me that gleeful way—
They will toll for me some happy day.

IN THE ORIENT.

THE valleys glowed like purple gulfs of flame,
The hills shone strong and clear,
And from the vine-clad terraces there came
The songs of vintage to the ear.

Half drugged with the drowsy wine of love,
And by those summer heats oppressed,
No wonder her eyes shone like stars above
The head reclining on her breast.

The lazy neap-tide, as it came and went,
Puls'd gently round her naked feet;
The sunlight with her nut-brown hair was blent
And made her face seem O how sweet!

I felt how much of subtleness there lies
In touch of woman's finger-tips;
I felt the lightning of her love-lit eyes,
The rain of kisses on my lips!

How ecstasy to words of fondness clung!
How hearts were fire-weld'd with hot tears!
How those white hands in agony were wrung
That waved adieu for years—for years!

TWO EPITAPHS.

I.

So he is dead? Well, let him rest.
What left he to the world behind?
Of thoughts and words and deeds the best,
And richest treasures of the mind.

II.

He died, as half the world do die:
Unwept for now and unlov'd then.
'Tis well: we say it with a sigh—
He has made room for better men!

THE FISHER'S DAUGHTER.

THE fisher's daughter walks the sands,
She shades her brow with nervous hands,
And gazes out beyond the strands.

A weird-like light the pale moon flings,
The gulls have folded up their wings,
The caves give back resonant dins.

The wavelets kiss her brown, bare feet;
She waits her father's step to greet;
Was ever face more fair 'or sweet?

A cabin stands on nearest height;
Within the window burns a light,
A star upon the brow of night.

What speck is that? A snow-white sail;
His fishing-smack outrides the gale.
What cry is that? His welcome hail.

A cheering sound above the roar,
The keel grates on the rocky shore—
God's hand has kept him safe once more.

Perhaps because of prayers she said.
He lays his hand upon her head;
She wonders why she felt afraid.

His wife sleeps on the sloping lea;
His only boy was lost at sea,
And no one left but Margery!

ALLEN CLYDE.

I BECAME your bride,
Allen Clyde.
Voices sweet were singing,
Bells were gladly ringing,
For old time was bringing
In the young and blushing year that day.

Since then I have often sighed,
And in wretchedness have cried—
Did you come and kiss my tears away,
Allen Clyde?

I became your bride,
Allen Clyde.
Flakes of snow were sifting,
The sun was uplifting
The clouds that were drifting
Away to a shore of ashen gray.
Whether weal or woe betide,
Did you swear to love your bride?
Ask your heart, some weary day,
Allen Clyde.

I became your bride,
Allen Clyde.
Ah! Were you kind and good!
Didst love me as you should?
As gentle lover would?
Tell me; it is just a year to-day.
Oh, I wish that I had died
On the night I stood a bride!
For I tread a dark and weary way,
Allen Clyde!

LOVE.

Her temple in the soul Love rears—
  She crowns with stars its arching dome,
And rich the gifts the pilgrim years
  In passing offer as their own.
With simplicity love wooes the heart,
And scorns the subtleties of art.

How bright her fires on the altars burn
  When Reason waves the kindling torch,
And Faith and Hope, in watchful turn,
  Stand guard upon the outer porch!
Unshriven hands should never touch
What glorifies our lives so much.

What made Heloise for Abelard
  Weep tears of tenderness and truth?
And who of stronger love hath heard
  Than that of Naomi and Ruth?
Or that of which, with burning tongue,
The blind old Bard of Scio sung?

The golden chord of sympathies
  Around the living world she binds,
And truths, eternal as the skies,
  Leap o'er this telegraph of minds!
The magnetism of our hearts to draw,
At once the prophet and the law!

AGATHA.

I.

WALKING amid a world of quiet dreams!
From amid thy shadowy hair
How white thy spotless forehead gleams!
There's not a face on which I care
Love's silent rapture thus to feed,
For thine is beautiful indeed.

II.

How like a holy, white-robed nun
Thou walkest 'neath the young May moon,
Waiting for thy last hour to come,
Yet fearing it may come too soon!
What fate hath wrapt thy life in gloom,
O watcher by the silent tomb?

III.

I see thee lying on thy bier,
And yet I cannot, would not weep,
And no sad mourner standing here
Would break thy quiet sleep.
Dead to all yearning and unrest—
Thou art, indeed, supremely blest!

HOW OUR FAN WAS CALLED.

"BEN, I've been called!" 'Twas our Fan sed that;
She had a way of blurting out her words;
She stood in the doorway, a-swingin' of her hat,
Her head sot to one side, jes' like a bird's.
I whar cooperin' away right brisk,
But let up, to give a hoop a whisk.

You see, boys, Fan wasn't like no other girl—
I mean her fancy didn't run on like theirs;
She never chaffered, nor set her lips a-curl,
And wasn't one to put on high-bred airs;
Instead, she'd lighten other people's cares,
And sort of do it unawares.

"Called to what?" axed I. "To die, d'ye mean?"
I sed it in a kind of teazin' way, you see.
Fan allers was in arnest, but I didn't dream
How near the truth my jokin' words had been.
She looked at me, an' ses she, with face serene,
"To die? Yes—if God should ask that of me!"

"Thar's work to do." "Oh, ev'ry whar," ses I.
"Work doun to Memphis!" an' Fan's lips shook.
"Send medicines and nurses is the cry!"
I gasped like when one's breath is took.
"*You* go to Memphis!" "Yes, why not I?"

I mus' say, boys, I understood her then.
"Nonsense, Sis! You *haven't* bin called!" I sed,
Yet knew 'tweren't no use when
Once our Fan had sot her head.
She shook it and ses, "I'm a-goin', Ben."
'Tweren't in my heart, no how, to say "Amen!"

Well—doun thar to Memphis our Fan went,
Amid the Pestilence's orful breath,
Whar Woe and Desolation whar blent
O'er pathways as led down to Death.
She on a angel mission sent,
To watch an' nurse, an' nurse an' bless.

"She cum back?" I never seed her agin:
She died down thar. God willed it so.
An' I tries hard, boys, not to complain,
But it kinder goes agin the grain.
It whar a ugly, back-handed blow
That sot my heart jumpin' wild with pain,
An' I don't think I'll ever know
How loss of her is goin' to be my gain.

IN THE SUGAR CAMP.

How it snows! How it blows!
Quite enough to freeze one's toes,
Or make him mutter as he goes,
"How confoundedly it blows!"
It is March, and the larch
Moans such weary moans,
And the trembling poplar trembles,
And the white pine flings its cones
On the rocks and scraggy stones.

It *augers* little good
When through the maple wood
The *borers* wend their noisy way;
To be rapping, to be sapping,
With a sort of *syrup*-titious tapping,
Where the juicy veins may lay.
Through tubes of elder or sumac
Flows the dripping sap;
And such nectar! even Hector
Would have stood protector
By those vessels filling to the brim,
Pouring over at the rim.

How the smoke is curling
And unfurling
Upward from the low-roofed shed;
While the men with faces red,

Under the kettles and the boilers—
Eighteen- and twenty-gallon boilers—
Thrust the blazing wood !
Oh, it does one good
Just to catch the flavor
And the savor
That comes from the scum,
And the deliquescent gum,
That may drip upon the wood,
If through carelessness it should !

How the girls,
With eyes like pearls,
Shining through their curls,
Pour the sugar into the moulds
With the dipper each one holds !
Verses improvising as they watch it crystallizing
In the icy air of night.
What a sight !
In itself a crystalline delight,
A saccharine delight.

There are foot-prints in the snow,
By the maples far below,
Where was little need to go ;
And peals of laughter ring upon the air,
Startling the drowsy hare,
And waking echoes everywhere.
Have a care, and beware !
Such tender wishes,
And such kisses,
Pretty misses,

May steal your hearts away
Some winter day,
So they may!

YOUR FACE IS GROWING WRINKLED.

Your face is growing wrinkled,
Your hair is growing gray,
And your eyes have caught a trick
Of looking far away;
But I love you more than ever,
And worship you to-day.

The things of earth are fleeting,
And plannings go astray;
Every timid pilgrim meets
A lion in the way;
And only those are safe, indeed,
Who daily watch and pray.

Your step has grown unsteady,
Your voice has lost its tone;
Sometimes I hear you moaning
A dreary, weary moan;
I feel that I may soon, ah, soon!
Be walking all alone.

E'er faithful to each other,
And loving God and man,
Thus arm in arm together
Our pilgrimage began;
So let us take our duties up,
And do them if we can.

LOOK FOR THE CROSS, THE ONLY GUIDE.

The traveler lost in Alpine snows
Seeks earnestly for the cross that shows
The way the narrow foot-path goes.

So should we, when turned aside
From walks that make life glorified,
Look for the Cross, the only Guide.

RAVENS-HALL.

A PRETTY, simple grange is Ravens-Hall,
With orchards fleck'd with fruitage in the fall,
With fields of drowsy wheat and bearded rye,
And other rural things to please the eye.

Into the dormer-windows on the top
The poplars their oily buds in season drop;
The sunlight shines in patches on the floors,
And vines are trailing round the narrow doors.

The old barn, with thatched and shelving roof,
Stands some twenty yards or so aloof;

The vane upon its peak unfailing shows
Which way the wind has shifted, when it blows.

The yellow corn shines through the clapboard bin,
And new-mown hay fills all the mows within ;
I have stood for hours by the open door
To watch the threshers beating on the floor.

The swallows 'mid the rafters build their nest,
Or stop awhile from mazy flights to rest;
So loud their twitter, and so great their din,
That *two* of them would surely make a Spring.

Among meadows stretching out of sight
The fences glimmer with a ghostly white—
More tasty where they line the dusty road,
O'er which the stage creeps daily with its load.

And the pines! 'mid trees so tall and grand as they
Ariel might improvise his soul away !
'Twas there the ravens met in ebon flocks,
To talk about the tardiness of crops;

Or, with flapping wings and deafening caws,
Extend their system of aggressive laws.
Other senates have met, we must confess,
That made more noise and yet accomplished less!

I will not say a raven's right to vote
Consists in great capacity of throat ;
That from choice, or fear of being cuffed,
Their judges see the boxes are well stuffed !

Though such things do occur, as each one knows,
In other republics than those of crows!
'Twere better if offices went once again,
Like Diogenes, in search of men!

The spring-house standing by the brook alone,
The tiles with green and yellow moss o'ergrown;
The well, with oaken bucket by the draw,
The lye dripping from the tubs of matted straw;

The fish-nets hanging by the jutting eaves,
The porch roof stock'd beneath with scythes and sieves;
Such simple things as these comprise the charms
That linger round our Pennsylvania farms.

The attic room, where in white gowns we knelt
To breathe the childish prayers which we felt,
Or awoke, to listen to the falling sleet,
To hoot of owl, or lambkin's plaintive bleat;

The dusky shadows and the sunlight floods,
The verdur'd meadows and the dappled woods,
The fields, the shady nooks, the waterfall—
Association weds us to them all.

It is true that in part, for things like these,
I love the grange, soft cradled in the trees;
Yet, were it built upon a dreary moor,
With no bright landscape sloping from the door,

With no ripening fruits nor herbage green,
Nor welcome face of stranger ever seen,

I feel I could not help but love it some,
For there the record of my life begun.

We love the homestead of our early years,
Sacred to our memory and our tears;
The hearth at which, with Bible on his knees,
Our father read of brighter skies than these.

Old Ravens-Hall! While now the sunlight floods
The verdured meadows and the dappled woods,
Let warmer inspiration seize my brain,
And more to Truth than Fancy give the rein!

WHO IS HAPPY?

He is happy who, with earnest hands,
Builds his fortune where he stands;
Who treats his fellows as he should,
And spends his life in doing good.

He is happy who, with conscience clear,
Braves the world. He has naught to fear
Who shows to others on the way
The goal he hopes to reach one day.

A PRAYER FOR STRENGTH.

Has sin defiled me with its touch?
Have I been righteous overmuch?
If so, O Lord, mark out my way,
And teach me what to do and say.

Not for the works that I have done—
How pitiful would be their sum!
Not for prayers that I have said,
Nor yet for tears that I have shed;

But because I confide in Thee—
But because thou hast died for me;
In that sweet promise I believe:
"O come to Jesus Christ and live!"

THE GATEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER.

From early dawn to ev'ning late
She sits beside the turnpike gate
To take the toll of those who wait.

They stop to chat with her awhile,
And what she says serves to beguile
The way for many a weary mile.

They call her pretty—and yet why?
'Tis not in lip, nor cheek, nor eye,
Unusual necromancies lie.

Her soul its purity betrays
In a thousand childlike ways,
And *that* long in their memory stays.

When done the life she glorifies,
O she shall sit with starry eyes
Within the Gates of Paradise!

TO THE STARS.

SWEET watchers of the night,
Bejeweling the summer air,
Say, are there "many mansions" there,
Beyond those gates so wide and fair?

O spirits of the dead!
As such ye sometimes seem to me,
As such I sometimes talk to ye,
And ask of things that are to be.

Ye send no answer back!
'Tis to reprove a faith so weak;
It is to make me pure and meek,
And happiness in Christ to seek.

Shine on, ye twinkling orbs!
And when my spirit wings its flight,
Blest with the knowledge of the right,
Mark out my pathway through the night!

A SERENADE.

Gently sighs the evening breeze,
  The moon is climbing higher;
Above the wavy line of trees
  I see the old church-spire.

There never was a night more fair,
  Nor heart more true than mine;
I've much to say I do not care
  To tell in idle rhyme.

Endearing words in whispers said,
  And with a touch of hands,
And glow of starry eyes that shed
  A light from summer lands.

Come forth, O sweet-voic'd love of mine!
  To lean upon my arm,
To share with me a night so fine,
  A love so true and warm;

To watch the fires of ev'ning gleam
  Beyond the hills of gray,
As side by side we sit and dream,
  And talk the night away.

OLD LETTERS.

QUITE simple things within themselves,
  Yet each a priceless gem;
What wonder that I bring them out,
  And read them, now and then?

How tremulous the lines appear!
  And here a blot or two!
But eyes were never made to see
  When scalding tears come through.

A tear! A volume in a drop!
  Soon shap'd and sooner shed.
Ah! hers were for the living wept—
  Let mine be for the dead.

She died, and so must I, some time;
  And some time it may please
A friend to weep o'er lines of mine,
  As I weep over these.

Thrice has the pawpaw flushed since then,
  And thrice has bloomed the pea;
And yet it seems, I scarce know why,
  Like many, many years to me.

FLOWERS, BRIGHT FLOWERS.

Flowers, bright flowers,
Wet with the dew,
Brought from dim bowers,
Dearest, for you.

In an after-thought
Linked to a vow
Was the wreath wrought
I offer thee now.

Lilies that nested
By the water's edge,
Blossoms that crested
The hawthorn hedge.

Violets found
In a twilight hush,
And roses that crowned
A flaming bush.

For what could I bring
More sweet and true,
Than flowers of Spring
To symbol you?

Smiles may be sad,
  And tears may be hot;
Flowers may fade,
  But our love will not.

ANOTHER YEAR.

ANOTHER year has sped its round,
  And sleeps amid the dreamy past;
The midnight bell with leaden sound
  Tells that its days have closed at last.

How many are the lost and dead?
  How many *now* upon their bier?
Yet *I*, by a Father's kindness led,
  Am still a waiting pilgrim here.

Holy Father! Amid the calm
  And stillness of this midnight hour,
My soul doth in an earnest psalm
  Sing of thy Goodness and thy Power.

May I thus ever kindly be
  An object of thy watchful care,
So that by living close to thee
  My life shall grow divinely fair!

THE RUINED CHURCH.

The winds of Autumn wildly moan
The vestibule within;
And prone upon the threshold stone
The broken doors are seen.

The ivy from each gothic arch
In rich festoons descends;
And by the broken stile the larch
Its branches sadly bends.

No longer with a winsome zest
Float church-bell chimes along;
The swallow with her matted nest
Has bound the iron tongue.

The sunbeams, as of erst, with smiles
  Shine on the pulpit old,
Or through the dim monastic aisles
  Trace out pathways of gold.

The tombstones ghostly gleam amid
  The tangled weeds and grass;
And late at night, with nervous dread,
  Boys whistle as they pass.

And though no more the fervent gush
  Of worship fills the air,
There lingers in the solemn hush
  A spell as sweet as prayer.

People once stood within those shades
  To watch some happy bride,
To see them christen sinless babes,
  Or bury those who died.

The 'Squire who gave the strip of land,
  And those who filled the pews,
The pastor who with upraised hand
  Proclaimed the Gospel news,

Sleep the sleep of the happy dead,
  Returned to dust again;
And those who grew up in their stead,
  Grew up purse-proud and vain.

The old church did not suit their time—
  One far more grand they built,

With bells that ring a silver chime,
With altar marble-gilt;

With a front that on the avenue
Shines gorgeous in the sun;
A belfry high, an organ, too,
That cost a princely sum.

There are no graves now, to remind
That all of us must die;
The rich, whose pockets are well lined,
The pews at auction buy!

But whether *there* more *grace* is known
Is not for me to say;
God does not gather up His Own
Until the Judgment Day.

THE SNOW.

The feathery flakes fill all the air
And nestle gently everywhere,
Till even homely things look fair.

The hills are clad in crystal sheen,
The trees in silver armor gleam,
And glassy bridges span the stream.

What king's exchequer e'er could buy
The many gems that meet the eye,
Thus softly sifting from the sky?

What artist could we e'er entice
To fashion but one quaint device
Like these we see in snow and ice?

O! the whole world is rich to-day!
'Tis true, these gems will melt away—
So does *all* wealth, the Scriptures say.

CHRIST THE CRUCIFIED.

CHRIST the crucified!
On Calvary thou was deified!
May thy death make my own death glorified!

Far from thee I live,
Failing thy goodness to perceive!
Doubting most when I should most believe!

Ever prone to err,
And ever ready to demur,
Or my daily crosses to defer!

Humble and contrite,
Lead me out of this dark night
Into the full splendor of the Light!

INSPIRATION.

INSPIRATION! First cradled in the skies
And shining earliest in the prophets' eyes!
At thy magic touch the rough marble gleams
Into ecstatic shapes, and breathes and lives!
'Tis thou who in the artist's waking dreams
The light of glory to the canvas gives!
The poet, too, doth catch the sparkling glow,
And strews with stars our darksome paths below.

In music, thy soul dissolving on the air
  Drops down in winning sounds into our own ;
And common things uncommon beauty wear
  When beaming rays of thine are round them thrown.
The fire of Genius ! The light Divine !
That streameth down the frowning walls of Time !

SULTRY NIGHT.

'Tis night ! Upon the sleeping air
  No sounds of life are heard;
Of trees that bend in silent prayer
  The branches scarce are stirred !
Listless the cloud isles float away
Into a calmer sea of gray !

Like to a girl with beating breast
  Who turns from mirth aside,
Half glad so soon, and yet depressed,
  To be a loving bride,
Doth glide the moon the stars amid,
Her blushing cheek from gaze half hid.

The owl gives out a plaintive moan
  From shadows drear and black,
Then waits to catch the answer thrown
  From distant belfry back ;

While far below wild-flowers spread
Above the houses of the dead!

So calm is all! so still! so lone!
No soft, reviving airs!
The thistle's restless down upon
No aimless voyage dares,
And night-bird from the leaves among
Scarce has the heart to raise her song!

So quiet all, that it doth seem
As if 'twere heaven here!
And none a thought of harm to dream
Or know a waking fear!
And all the world so richly blest
That God himself hath gone to rest!

BRINGING WATER FROM THE SPRING.

FRAMED in by the dusky wood
With fingers to her lips she stood,
More pretty than a startled fawn
Wandering in the starless dawn.

Her cheeks and lips were cherry red,
Her eyes were dark with tears unshed,
Her teeth were white as any pearls,
Her laugh was joyous as a girl's.

Why gazed she forth with such intent?
Why were her ears attentive bent?
Why sank her laugh to gentle hush?
Why glowed her cheeks with crimson flush?

Her bucket stood beside the spring;
Why did she loiter? Idle thing!
Her mother calling from the gate,
And chance of breakfast being late!

She heard a step adown the lane,
Heard one who whistled as he came;
Who always, at the dawn of day,
Somehow came lounging down that way!

She gave her curls a saucy toss—
Curls that were bright and soft as floss;
And filled her bucket to the brim—
He should not know she watched for him.

He came in sight—a handsome lad
In plain and cleanly homespun clad,
With trustful eyes and honest face—
A scion of a toiling race.

He took from her the dripping pail,
Not that he feared her strength might fail,

Or that so distant was the way,
Or that he had so much to say.

So much! 'Twas but a gentle word
That all her tender being stirred,
That made her turn her face aside,
More blushful than a new-made bride.

The farmer's wife turned from the gate;
What though the breakfast might be late?
The dinner, or the supper, too,
When bonnie Reuben stopped to woo?

There was a time when, up the glade,
She, too, had loitered as a maid,
And listened to the vows of one
Whose life, like his, was fair and young.

GROWING OLD TOGETHER.

FRIENDS may be false—friends may be true—
And friends deceive us sadly,
But what is that to me or you,
Who love each other madly?

You have your faults, and I have mine,
We have good traits in common;
Angels, indeed, serenely shine,
But they are more than human.

The years go by, old age creeps on,
And wan white hands grow nervous;
We see, more clearly, right from wrong,
And honor those who serve us.

Together we have thus grown old—
Ne'er guilty of deceiving;
A kingdom lies beyond Death's wold,
For those who die believing.

We know the grave is very nigh,
Cold, shivering, and cheerless,
And yet we heave no weary sigh,
And eyes are calm and tearless.

For Death but opens wide the gate
To Life that is immortal,
And those who in sweet patience wait
Are first to cross the portal!

WISHES.

HEAVEN—bless her daily tasks,
God—encamp about her!
Hope—give all the strength she asks,
Love—be naught without her!

Life—grow sweeter ev'ry day,
Heart—grow strong for duty!
Death—point out the starry way
To the Land of Beauty!

PRESS KISSES UNTO MINE, MOIST LIPS.

PRESS kisses unto mine, moist lips,
Breathe out my name, sweet voice;
Gaze fondly into mine, dark eyes,
And make my heart rejoice.

Come back, soft sighs, upon the air,
Seek out, white hand, my own;
Catch, waiting ear, the noiseless tread,
So ghost-like does it come.

Ah me! I breathless wait in vain,
Nor sigh nor step I hear;
Nor hands I feel, nor lips that kiss
Away the scalding tear.

The rain against the casement beats;
And by the dripping eaves
The wind sweeps with a gentle moan,
Like quivering of sheaves.

It hath a voice. It seems to say,
"O why thus sadly weep?
Tears dropping on the silent dead
Can never break their sleep."

Sweet one! Thou liest in the grave,
From weariness at rest;
O may my life like thy life be—
My death as richly blest!

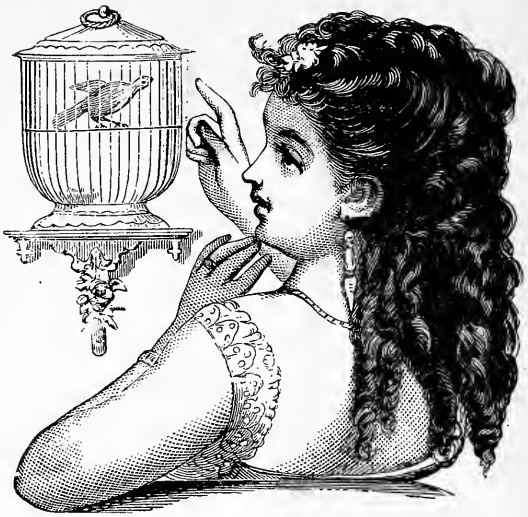
I AM WAITING, ANDRIAN!

I AM waiting, Andrian!
While the stars up the silver bars
Of night trace a half translucent light,
And the ocean's moan, but a weary monotone,
Makes my heart seem still more lone—
More lone, Andrian!

I am waiting, Andrian!
Clasp I hands, on the sands,
Less white than my face to-night!
Echo mocks my tread in the crags overhead,
And I shrink away in dread—
In dread, Andrian!

I am waiting, Andrian!
Half in fear, yet no tear
Of grief comes to give my heart relief.
Who so full of sorrow would care to borrow
Farther sadness from the morrow—
The morrow, Andrian!

I am waiting, Andrian!
With a sullen roar groans the shore,
While the gulls, in the momentary lulls
Of the storm, flit about my form,
And shrieking as in pain, say I wait in vain—
In vain, Andrian!



OVER THE WAY.

THERE are two objects o'er the way—
I stand and watch them day by day:
A singing bird with golden wings,
A maiden fair for whom he sings.

He pertly twists his yellow throat,
And in his song links note to note,
To touch the heart with sweet surprise,
Then curtly winks his bead-like eyes.

She feeds him with her finger-tips,
She lets him peck her scarlet lips;
He sees the gently falling tear,
He hears her sigh, when none are near.

But can he give back sigh for sigh?
Or read the love-glance in her eye?
Translate a tear? Or know the bliss
That lies within a rapturous kiss?

No interchange of tender speech,
No lore to learn that love can teach,
No yearnings, which so fitful burn
That cheeks grow red and white by turn.

O little bird—I envy thee!
O bright-eyed maid—I pity thee!
Nor envy nor pity will mend
The grievous matter, little friend.

A lover will come by and by,
O maiden with the kindling eye!
Who'll love thee better than his life,
And take thee home to be his wife.

May he be kind, may he be good,
Be all that gentle lover should!
O'er the way quite drear will be
When maid and bird no more I see.

BROWN EYES.

So full of holy love and trust,
A voiceless speech is theirs indeed!
And yet how earnestly they plead!
Or sparkle, when they say, "*You must!*"

How much of love and constancy
An eye of deep'ning brown implies!
We know not where its beauty lies,
And so we look again—*to see!*

To bachelors this a risk may be;
At least it was to me, I know.
Brown eyes light up my life below,
For I once looked again, to see!

VERY SOON TOLD.

I.

ADORNED in a veil of tremulous lace
Softly enfolding thy beautiful face,
And sweet-scented flowers in blossom and bloom
Torn from the breast of the odorous June!
A young blushing bride to the altar he led thee,
Thy beautiful life lost in his when he wed thee!

II.

A simple cap with its edging of lace
Inclosing thy white and sorrowful face!
A shroud less white in the shadowy gloom—
A phantom to startle the night in June!
Forgetting the vows that he made when he wed thee,
He down to the grave of the heart-broken led thee!

HOPEFUL TO THE END.

The world was never kind to me:
I drifted idly out to sea
Without a compass; with no chart
Except my purity of heart.

It is for that I thank my God!
He gave me Grace, and so I trod
O'er slippery places and was saved;
Yes—for this let God be praised!

And now I see the shining goal,
And newer life is in my soul;
I lay my pilgrim staff aside,
And trust in Mercy to the tide.

MANY, MANY LEAGUES AT SEA.

At eve I pace the yellow sands—
I wipe my hair with nervous hands,
So thick with dew the shining bands.
I sigh, I moan, O wearily!
For many, many leagues of sea
Now lie between my love and me!

His lips rained kisses on my hair!
He left me standing, trembling there!
He said, in words so soft and fair,
"I will come back, come back to thee,
Though many, many leagues of sea
May lie between my love and me!"

I wait and wait for that glad day
When he will come again this way,
When he will take my hands and say,
"I come, I come, at last to thee!
No more shall weary leagues of sea
E'er lie between my love and me!"

O do not say I wait in vain!
That others watched with throbbing brain
For truant ones who never came!
So false to me he could not be,
Though many, many leagues of sea
Do lie between my love and me!

THE WORLD IS FULL OF EARNEST MEN.

The world is full of earnest men,
Who live to love and labor,
To do the little good they can,
And help a struggling neighbor.

With grace increasing as they go,
With hearts to friendship given,
They rob life's journey of its woe,
And make of earth a heaven.

There is a light their souls within,
Though dark the skies above them;
Each sits enthroned through life a king
Amid the hearts that love them.

MY BABY-BOY IS DEAD!

My baby-boy lies on my breast:
How early and supremely blest,
To know no sorrow nor unrest!

My baby-boy lies on the bier:
Earliest flowers of the year
Gather to shed their fragrance here.

My baby-boy lies in the tomb:
There comes an answer from the gloom,
"Within the grave there yet is room."

My baby-boy lives in the sky,
Where worlds in careless beauty lie,
And I shall see him, by and by!

DREAM VAGARIES.

PARTED from the world in slumber,
Or the calmer arms of sleep,
Through my weary brain go flitting
Fancies strange and deep.
Fields of beauty treading, dazzling and wide-spreading,
I awaken but to weep.

O, such spells of deep'ning rapture!
O, such winsome notes of song!
O, such visions born of fancy,
How they shapen, how they throng!
Till my soul resistless, like a leaf is listless,
Borne the leaping tide along.

Floating on through airy visions,
With sail lagging in the breeze,
Pass I islands like Ionia,
Gently cradled in the seas—

Islands sweet and olden, with the glories golden
That the white-robed summer weaves.

Songs of love and songs of vintage,
And the thrum of saraband,
And feet rustling like the branches
By the southern breezes fanned;
All the air is waking, blending with the breaking
Of the waves upon the sand.

Upon the harp and cithern
Trembling fingers sweep the strings,
And tears glisten on the lashes
Of the maiden while she sings;
Castanets are keeping time to the beating
Of the feet within the rings.

Thus I float by islands wasting
Precious spices on the breeze,
Islands flecked with all the fruitage
Of the tropic and the seas—
Isles of song and story, never bleak nor hoary
With the frost the Winter weaves.

A NAME THAT WAS NOT MINE.

You turned your face away from me,
You heard not what I said,
Nor knew how bitter were to me
The weary tears I shed,
But gazed far out upon the sea
With face white as the dead.

I felt your curls upon my cheek,
I saw your dark eyes shine;
I heard your white lips gently speak
A name that was not mine.
My heart grew desolate and bleak,
Yet made no outward sign.

I spoke not of my love for you,
That throbbed in heart and brain;
How dark the shades of ev'ning grew!
How poignant grew my pain!
How moaningly the sea-winds blew!
How damp the misty rain!

In sullenness I bit my lips,
And felt my heart grow chill,
Although those burning finger-tips
Made all my pulses thrill.
My hopes went down like freighted ships
When all is calm and still!

BROKEN PLEDGES.

We walked across the hazel dell
  Down to the water's edge,
Where the shades of evening fell
  Across the rocky ledge.

The tide went dipping softly by—
  It touched your naked feet;
It seemed to me that none but I
  Should come so near my sweet.

I could not see your dark eyes shine,
  But I could hear you speak;
I knew that tender words of mine
  Brought blushes to your cheek.

I parted from you, then and there,
To be away for years;
You gave to me a lock of hair —
I kissed away your tears.

Do words indeed sometimes mean naught?
And kisses little more?
Are vows with unreal fervor fraught?
Is love but idle lore?

When I came back—ah me! ah me!
You were another's bride!
Life seems so wearisome to me
I wish that I had died!

COME TO ME, WHITE SPIRIT!

Come to me, white spirit!
Come on the viewless air to me,
And speak of earnest things that be,
Of life beyond the shores of Time!
I'll not shrink timidly away
To see thee in thy bright array,
But fondly place my hand in thine.

Come to me, white spirit!
From the shadowy realms of Death,
With fragrance of flowers in thy breath,
And inspiration in thine eyes!

Thy lips still wear a crimson glow,
Thy robe is white as sifted snow,
And gemm'd with gems from Paradise.

Come to me, white spirit!
Floating upon the atmospheres,
Which bring naught of sighs nor tears
Back from the City of the Blest!
In Duty's path alone, I know,
Our souls more beautiful can grow,
And sink like evening stars to rest.

THE POET'S WISH.

O LET me write deep, earnest lines—
I care not if they simple be,
So they but make men's hearts to throb,
And turn with warmer glow to me.

Upon the forge within the soul
All earnest, living thoughts are wrought;
Not strange that they in other souls
Should find the echo which they sought.

How many waifs from other times
Fill souls with hopes or eyes with tears,
While tomes of voidless thought lie lost
Upon the shores of by-gone years!

Be mine the poet's mission, then,
To sing as sing the summer birds;
No mists to hide the arrow's flash,
Uprising from a sea of words.

Sooner let it be said, when glow
Of thought no more this heart can touch,
"What pity he so little wrote!"
Than, "Sad it is he wrote so much!"

LOVE'S MOODINESS.

WATCH for me, wait on me,
Call me a star!
Think of me, be to me
What lovers are!

Worship me, cling to me
Loving and true;
Call for me, bring to me
Thoughts fresh and new!

Share with me, spare for me
Every sweet!
Watch o'er me, care for me,
Guiding my feet!

All your smiles give to me,
All your best love!

Say that you live for me,
  Live but to love!

Say you would cry for me,
  When I but grieve;
Say you would die for me
  That I might live!

FAITH AND LOVE. A FRAGMENT.

Once, in wandering through the world, I saw
  A sweet and lovely child kneel down in prayer,
Untutored in the letter and the law,
  And yet the faith of good old Paul was there.
It shone within the soft and melting eyes,
  It hung upon the lips of rosy hue,
And in the tones that sought for new supplies
  Of grace: and round her, to my eyes there grew
A bright halo, such as often shone
Around God's Son, in days long since agone.

And then, in turn, I saw an old man die—
  His hair was hoary with the frost of years;
And on his wrinkled face there seemed to lie
  A saddened tale of waning hopes and fears.
And *his* faith, too, grew stronger more and more,
  As life grew gently "less upon the lee."

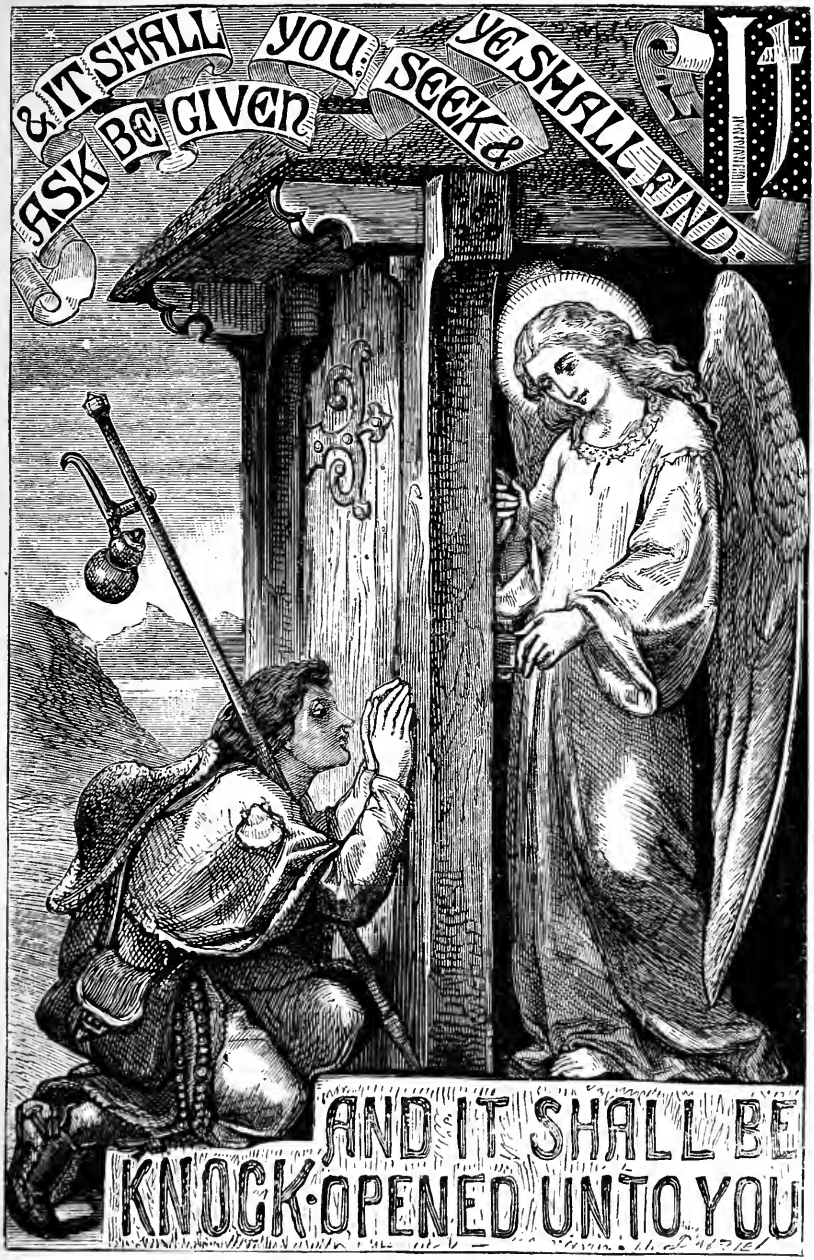
The beating of Time's waves upon the shore
Spoke not to him of night and mystery.
The one December and the other May,
And night of both quick breaking into day.

BESIDE THE GATE.

BESIDE the gate
I sit and wait;
And the night grows late,
O Warden with Sword of Flame!
My heart is sick, my feet are sore,
The way was rough I travel'd o'er,
The winds were sharp, the frosts were hoar.

Beside the gate
I sit and wait;
And the night grows late,
O Warden with Keys of Gold!
The plains were wide, the hills were steep,
The night brought neither rest nor sleep,
The world laughed when it saw me weep.

Beside the gate
I sit and wait;
And the night grows late,
O angel Warden within!
All the long way I bore my cross,
Counted as gain each worldly loss,
Sifted my gold from dust and dross.



"Beside the gate
I sit and wait;
And the night grows late,
O Warden with Keys of Gold!"

Beside the gate
I sit and wait ;
And the night grows late,
O Warden with Crown of mine !
A pilgrim weary, wan and old,
Uplifts the cross that he doth hold,
So open wide the Gates of Gold !

THE DYING CHASSEUR.

In the cannon's deaf'ning thunder,
Horse and foot went under,
And with awe-struck wonder
The massive lines swept on—
Down the rocky steepness,
Through the morass's deepness,
O'er the moor's black bleakness,
Till in its great completeness
The battle for the day was won.

Tired, broken down, and jaded,
With colors torn and faded,
By the shades of evening aided,
The vanquished fell away ;
The fight for the to-morrow
Not the faintest hope could borrow,
From the carnage, from the horror,
That had been dealt them on that day.

Beneath a tree there rested,
His brow with blood incrested,
One whose arm had bravely tested
The fiercest of the din;
Heedless that the field so gory,
That the victory of glory,
To live in song and story,
Had brought but death to him.

"Quick, comrade! raise me higher,
Press me tighter, nigher!
'Tis my heart's last desire
To see the sunset fire
Stretch away in ruddy streaks—
For Eloise, my sweet, my dearest,
With eyes the brightest and the clearest,
Home—the fairest and the rarest,
Love—the truest, the sincerest—
All lie beyond those frowning peaks!

"My wife! O my brave Turcello—
O I pray you tell her
That in the sunset mellow
I died—her name upon my lips!
That in a vision's splendor
(O Love of Christ defend her!)
I saw a light, so soft, so tender,
As but eyes of hers could render,
Flash over my life's eclipse!

"Tell my children of the battle—
How amid the deaf'ning rattle,

Like herds of frightened cattle,
  The foemen turned and fled!
How we fought like ghouls, like demons,
Wherever waved our pennons,
Where fiercest belched the cannons,
  Trampling o'er the dying and the dead!

"The smoke from grim death's censer
Makes the air grow denser,
Makes my heart to throb intenser,
  And to bleed at every pore!
Can you, comrade, raise me higher?
Can you press me closer, nigher?
'Tis my heart's last desire
To see once more the sunset fire,
  And know that all is o'er!"

But an eyelid's faintest quiver,
But the frame's involuntary shiver,
And that heart was still'd forever,
  And the chasseur's fight was done;
Not his, at break of dawn to waken,
To see the legions, compact, unshaken,
Fight till every trench was taken,
  Till a lasting peace was won!

ALMOST HOME!

"ARE we almost Home?"
Ah, yes, Pilgrim!
Wanderer on the Shores of Time,
With shattered staff,
And beard all white with rime;
Journeying to the Mecca of thy soul,
At first the cradle and at last the goal:
Sweet the answering echoes come—
"Almost Home!"

"Are we almost Home?"
Ah, yes, sweet child!
Trustingly nestling on the breast
That would have thee stay,
Yet envies thee thy rest!
Still standing on the vestibule of life
With no laurels gathered in the strife!
Low angelic whispers come—
"Almost Home!"

"Are we almost Home?"
Ah, yes, dear girl!
Lingerer in this world below—
Pale watchers counting
The moments as they go;

Living—to wear ere long thy bridal veil;
Dying—to wear instead the shroud so pale;
First the altar, then the tomb!
"Almost Home!"

THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

Symbol of Shame! Wretch, bow thy head!
Thy weight of sin bemoan,
And wrap the darkness of the dead
Around thy heart of stone!
Thy guilt so great that Jesus bled
To ransom and atone!

Symbol of Hope! O soul of mine,
Why so despondent grieve?
See, how aloft its glories shine!
Look up, O soul, and live!
For light, and life, and love are thine,
Which none but Christ can give!

Symbol of Life! Soul evermore
Be thou a welcome guest!
Of promises, O soul adore,
The sweetest and the best!
We leave at last earth's gloomy shore
To be for aye at rest!

THE LIGHT-HOUSE IN A STORM.

With dull resonant roar
The breakers lash the shore,
And winds sigh evermore,
  Bemoaning their unrest;
The wildly screaming mews
Go by in noisy crews,
Lost in the dusky hues
  Which enfold the west.

The crashing thunders rend
The heavens, as they send
The sharp peals that portend
  Demon orgies at sea.
The lightning, in its gleam,
Pours down a molten stream,
Till the great chalk cliffs seem
  White spectral knights to be!

Upon a jutting reef,
To all the clamor deaf—
To seaman's great relief,
  The tow'ring light-house stands;
And through the dark eclipse,
Though silent are its lips,
It signals to the ships,
  And waves its flaming hands!

O brightly burn the lamps
Amid the gloom and damps;
Hourly the keeper tramps
  Up, up the spiral stair;
A warden true though grim,
For woe betideth him
If lights burn faint and dim
  When Death rides on the air!

Thus in the paths of life,
With snares and pitfalls rife,
Amid the daily strife
  The lamps of Heaven shine.
The weary pilgrim sees,
And seeing, he believes,
Nor once the pathway leaves,
  Till called in God's good time!

LITTLE NELLIE.

Is there laughter in the parlor?
  Are there footsteps in the hall?
Do my eyes grow brighter, brighter,
  As I hear a childish call?
There's no laughter in the parlor,
  And in the hall no tread,
And my eyes are red with weeping,
  For my little girl is dead!

Like a phantom in the gloaming
  The misty rain flits by,
And the night wind in its moaning
  But mocks me as I sigh;

At the thought she is not near me,
What bitter tears I shed!
I have altered much, I fear me,
Since my little girl is dead.

In the church-yard they have laid her,
With a rose-bush at her feet,
That, I half believe, will blossom
Through all the snow and sleet!
'Twas four years since; and "four years old"
May on the stone be read;
And yet it seems but yesterday
They told me she was dead!

Her face was like an angel's,
And her eyes were like the stars,
And she comes to me in visions
Adown yon shining bars!
She is singing by Life's River,
With a crown upon her head!
Then why should I be sorry
That my little girl is dead?

NO OCCASION TO SIGH.

I.

Sorrowful and sad one day,
I sat me down by the open door;
A cloud of rain in mistiness lay,
A phantom wreck on an azure shore.

II.

Humming a cheerful air was I
As I sat by the open door;
What occasion had I to sigh
When the sunlight shone on the oaken floor?

JUNE FLOWERS.

Flowers, sweet flowers,
Flung from the hands of od'rous June,
To awake from a dreamy budding
Into a rapturous bloom!

Flowers, sweet flowers,
Born of a thought that was pure!
Blessed be God for these riches
To gladden the hearts of the poor!

Flowers, sweet flowers!
Nuns who are child-like and good,
Worshipping—fireless, priestless—
In the mossy aisles of the wood!

Flowers, sweet flowers!
For the bride and the sheeted dead—
Speaking of Hope to the living,
Of rest for the souls that have fled!

Flowers, sweet flowers!
O fill with your fragrance the air,
When my soul shall escape from death
Up the shining slopes of prayer!

THE TWINS.

Come, Painter, paint this scene for me—
It much of fame will bring to thee.
I'll part the curtains wider still:
There, artist eyes, drink in your fill!

Two babes locked in one embrace,
Two cherubs sleeping face to face;
Their lips so parted with a smile,
We wonder what they dream the while.

Their hair upon the pillow floats,
And nestles round their snowy throats;

Two gems are they from Paradise
To fill the soul with ecstasies.

Say, will you paint those babes for me?
Babes sweet as any babes can be?
You shake your head with vacant air,
For none can paint the beauty there.

MARCH.

The north winds blow less fierce and shrill,
Stretches of verdure crown the hill,
The ice is breaking by the mill.

The sunlight sparkles on the sleet,
The rabbit steals from her retreat,
The sheep upon the hillsides bleat.

The dormouse wakens from its sleep,
From limb to limb the squirrels leap,
The daisy takes a timid peep.

The air beams with a warmer glow,
The heat dissolves the veil of snow;
Buds soon will burst and blossoms blow.

Against the east bright colors cling,
The unchain'd brooks rejoice, and sing
A welcome to the new-born spring.

In winter Nature takes her rest;
The germs beneath her frozen breast
Will make the spring supremely blest.

So death is but a quiet sleep:
The grave cannot forever keep
The darling ones o'er whom we weep.

If God has led them by the hand,
They will awake at his command
In that eternal Summer Land!

APRIL.

Blossoms drop from trees and bushes
Sweet as the smile of unsaid words;
And in the mellow air there gushes
Wantonest melody of birds.

With verdure the hills are crested,
The valley is a lap of green;
Lilies, white, and tiger-vested,
Fringe the borders of the stream.

Against the west the clouds have drifted,
Like ships astrand on sunken isles;
The shower breaks—then, quick uplifted,
The rainbow spreads its beaming smiles.

Blade, and leaf, and ripplet dances
Blithely to the rhythm of the rain;
The sunlight drops its golden lances,
And all is bright and calm again.

APRIL, bright-eyed! Soon departed!
Sweet her girlish whims and wiles;
None can call her fickle-hearted,
However much she weeps and smiles.

Are not *we* at times capricious?
As *much* the sport of smiles and tears?
Led by whims most injudicious
O'er trackless wastes of hopes and fears?

Her gentle rains set roses trailing,
And flowers blow to genial ray;
In her sunsets softly paling
Is framed the blushing face of MAY!

MAY.

IN wayside nooks, in quiet bowers,
Where shadows dark and brooding lay,
Laughing maidens gather flowers
With which to crown the Queen of May.

Brown birds flutter in the hedges,
The belted bees cling to the thyme;

The wind wanders through the sedges,
  And weaves their moanings into rhyme.

Pearly hues cling to the mountain,
  A pleasing hush clings to the woods;
Song of brook and gush of fountain
  Break in upon the solitudes.

All the air is filled with sweetness,
  Delightful are the noonday calms;
Nature smiles in her completeness,
  And morning dews distill their balms.

The twilight settles on the clover,
  The mower puts away his scythe;
Beside the gate a rustic lover
  Seeks favor in his sweetheart's eyes.

The air darkens, and the roses
  Fold up the leaves outspread at noon;
And night, by light of stars, discloses
  The pathway of the young May moon!

JUNE.

COME and watch the morning break
Across the misty river!
Every sedgy leaf's awake,
And every wave a-quiver!

Underneath the bending sky
A thousand tuneful voices!
Ev'ry pulse is beating high,
And everything rejoices!

Garden herbs their perfume shed,
The artichokes flare yellow;
Poppy leaves blush rosy-red,
And harvest pears grow mellow.

What a din, within the pines,
The noisy crows are keeping!
Nods the grain in wavy lines,
Soon ripe enough for reaping!

By the cherry-trees is heard
A red and ceaseless dripping;
In the vines the humming-bird
Keeps up his tireless sipping.

Who can ever weave to rhyme
This riot of the roses?

Or sounds that in the summer-time
Break in on our reposes?

Brightly falls the morning light,
Softly falls the dew of even,
Silently the balmy night
Shuts the gates of heaven!

JULY.

Deep in the brook's refreshing shade
The panting cattle slowly wade,
While leaves above are scarcely stirr'd
By breeze, or flutt'ring wing of bird.

Above us bends the heated sky;
The gnats in lance-like lines go by;
So dry and parched the meadow grass,
The engines fire it as they pass.

The cricket beats its noonday drone;
The bees cling to the hay new-mown;
An eagle poises in mid-air:
No eye but his can stand the glare.

We think of April's gentle rays,
Her smiles and tears, capricious ways—
Of rambles 'neath the young May moon,
Of sweet and balmy hours of June;

With aching eyes and fev'rish brain,
We sigh for changing winds and rain;
E'en for November's frosty air,
Than suffer from the heat and glare.

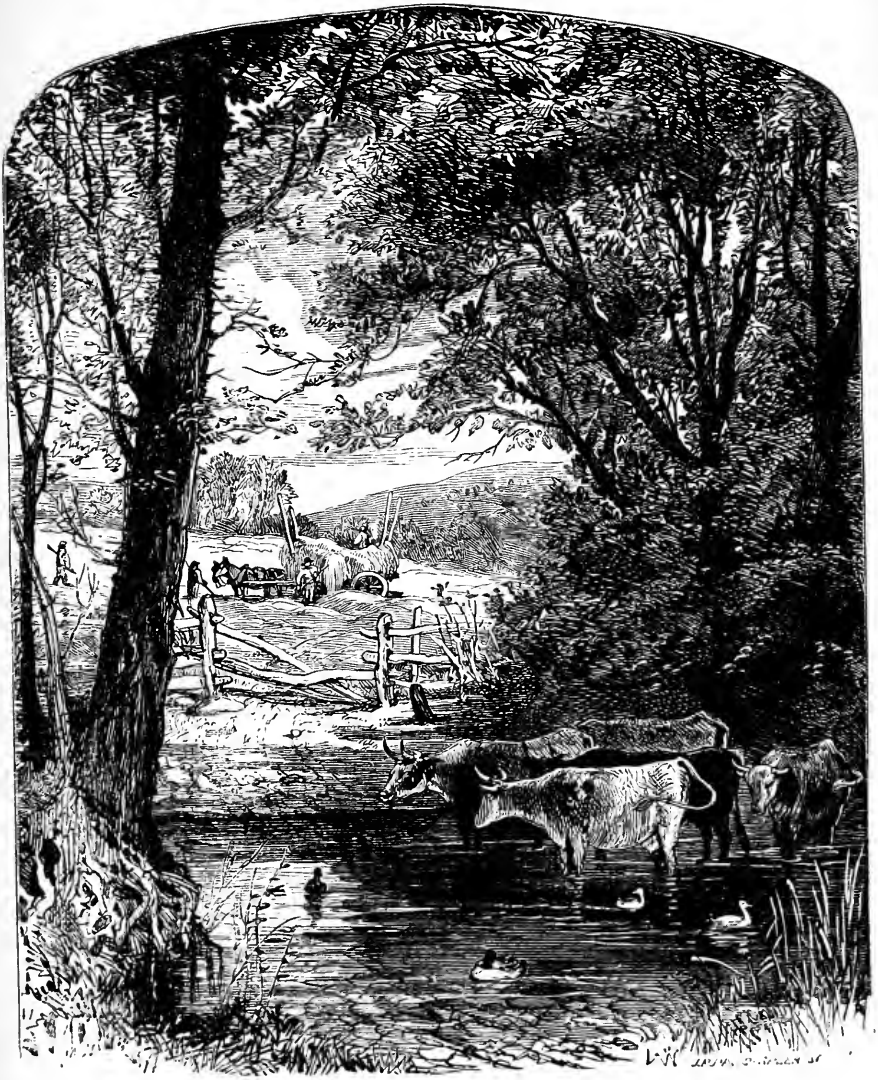
AUGUST SHOWERS.

THE showers fall in fitful mood,
The sunlight breaks above the wood;
And next, across a wall of rain
The lightning trails its scarf of flame.

The flowers lift their drooping heads,
Pearls glisten on the spiders' threads;
And, with brightening tints of green,
The meadows line the sparkling stream.

Sluggish vapors hang in mid-air,
Above the fields new-mown and bare;
The purplish mists blend hill and sky,
And birds make joyful melody.

Gusts of wind the tree-tops shake,
And gently ruffle stream and lake,
Or blend with heated atmospheres
Till Nature laughs amid her tears.



"Deep in the brook's refreshing shade
The panting cattle slowly wade."

These August rains! Oh, how we pray
That they may come, most any day,
To break the sultry summer heat
And make the earth look fair and sweet!

NOVEMBER.

The wind moans with a weary moan
  It caught up by the restless sea;
And in its breath, to mist half blown,
  A chilliness there seems to be.
In granaries cobwebb'd and dim
  Lie heaps of yellow corn in store,
While round the rafters floats the din
  Of threshers beating on the floor.
November, wrapped in robes of gloom,
Follows October to the tomb.

Wild geese, mere specks the clouds amid,
  To autumn scenes now bid adieu;
The rabbit in the brush lies hid,
  With but her eyes to glimmer through;
The chestnut bursts its bristly coat
  To tempt the truant school-boy's feet;
The partridge shuts its piping throat
  While hunters round the coppice beat;
November over the landscape steals
With bleak December at its heels.

HOME ON FURLOUGH.

The bugles blare, the drums peal out,
The air flings back a noisy shout,
A sea of faces lines the route.

Adown the street the column tramps,
And faces seen in glare of lamps
Are bronzed by battle-fields and camps.

Home only for a week or so!
Sweethearts and wives to greet—then go
Again to meet the wily foe.

They care not where they die, nor when!
Who would have thought there could have been
So much unselfishness in men!

What age or country ever knew
Of hearts more noble, brave and true
Than beat beneath those coats of blue?

Mistrustful, I would keep away
From me the man who does not say,
"God bless our heroes of to-day!"

SO A MESSMATE WROTE.

"We found him," so a messmate wrote,
"Clinging to the treacherous moat,
A sabre-wound deep in his throat.

"His lips apart, his eyes still bent
Upon the frowning battlement,
On which the fearful charge was spent.

"The hero-boy! As soldiers should,
Beneath a cross, simple and rude,
We laid him in a quiet wood."

From out the darkest clouds of night
His country called him to the fight,
And heart of his and mine said, "right!"

Wounded—O suddenly and deep!
Is there forgetfulness in sleep?
Do we feel better when we weep?

I cannot think brave thoughts to-day—
So, like a sorrowing child, I'll lay
My hands across my breast and pray.

MARCH 21, 1864.

THE CAVALRY CHARGE.

A PEAL from the throats of the bugles,
A rushing up from the rear,
A gleaming of swords in the sunlight,
A clatter of hoofs on the ear.

A flash in the eyes of the riders,
A flash in the eyes of the steeds;
"A life for a life," says Sadi,
Was one of the Norsemen's creeds.

Down the ravine streams the torrent,
Prayers from Heaven invoke;
How many horses come riderless,
Out of that sulphurous smoke?

Over yon ridge they are dashing,
Avenging the comrades who fell,
And shrill o'er the shuddering clamor
Is heard their voluminous yell.

A battery masked in a coppice,
Belching forth shrapnel and grape,
That it is gives to the charge
Deadly and definite shape.

Now comes the brunt of the battle—
See how they die by their guns!

An infantry support is a poor one,
That fires a volley—then runs!

The lines of the foemen waver
As the charge comes surging on;
The fight for the day is over,
And a battle lost and won!

APRIL, 1864.

LASHED TO THE MAST.

PAST the sentinel forts
Dash'd boldly the ships,
Guns belching forth fire
From their red-hot lips.
The crews sworn together
To stand to the last,
By the brave Admiral
Lashed to the mast.

Amid the smoke flutter'd
The stripes and the stars;
Above the din was heard
The shouts of the tars.
None car'd for the danger,
And none stood aghast—
Was not the Admiral
Lashed to the mast?

The loud roar of the guns,
The shriek of the shells,
The air filled with smoke
And sulphurous smells.
A hail of hot iron
Thick falling and fast,
Round the brave Admiral
Lashed to the mast.

The deck of the flag-ship
Slippery with gore,
Thund'ring from ev'ry
Huge gun that she bore.
The Tecumseh went down
In the fearful blast,
Wept by the Admiral
Lashed to the mast.

O how it stirs the heart
Of loyal and leal
To think of that fight in
The Bay of Mobile!
Where navy won laurels
More bright than the past,
Under old Farragut
Lashed to the mast!

The American navy—
The best in the world!
The American Banner—
The proudest unfurl'd!

The American Sailor—
Let cowards avast!
The type of her bravest
Lashed to the mast!

AUGUST 17, 1864.

THE SNOW THROUGH THE NIGHT.

SOFTLY the snow is sifting,
Into the hollows drifting,
Draping all the hills in white;
The clouds while westward winging
Great, wide stairways are flinging
Down from heaven through the night!

A thousand gems are shining,
On ermine scarfs entwining
Porch and gables old and bare;
And trees in robes, white, saintly,
Decked with diamonds quaintly,
Fling their arms out on the air.

Faint signal lights are streaming,
And phantom tents are gleaming
On the distant mountain ridge;
And sentinels crouch grimly
Where are outlined dimly
The mill and its rustic bridge.

Such tapestry, such webbing,
On looms of human threading
Never were so deftly spun;
Nor carpets soft and yielding,
The faintest echo shielding,
As those from heaven flung.

Each gentle flake, though roving,
Is born of God's great loving,
Does its mission well and right;
While we, almost anointed,
Neglect the work appointed,
And go groping through the night.

IN THE SWING.

SWINGING among the white maples,
  Shut away from the sultry noon,
A picture to haunt the mem'ry
  Framed in the rich summer bloom.

Two little feet of pearl whiteness
  Are flutt'ring about in the air,
And two little eyes are twinkling
  In the mists of her amber hair.

A jupe that is blushing scarlet
  In the clasp of a starry zone;
A mouth as red as a leopard's,
  A voice low and sweet in its tone.

A shout and a peal of laughter,
  A kiss thrown from a tiny hand,
As if on an outward-bound steamer
  Veering away from the land.

Thus dreaming away her childhood,
  A beautiful vision of bliss;
No thought of a world in future,
  Contented with little in this.

Dear me! It sets one a-thinking;
Good thoughts make us better, we know;
Half of us jog along dreaming
Upon the short journey below.

NEARING THE BEACH.

The shore grew dim in the falling spray,
And our eyes grew dim with our tears;
For were we not drifting calmly away
From the Castle of Doubts and Fears?

The oars ceased their monotonous sweep,
We gazed into each other's eyes;
Mine, like the sea, were moody and deep,
And yours were as blue as the skies.

"One little word my dull life to bless!"
When, dipping your hands in the spray,
Did not your heart whisper fondly, "yes,"
Though your lips whispered sadly, "nay"?

I spoke again. What was it I said?
Love learns not its speeches by rote;
Your heart leap'd to the answer it made,
And mine—it crept into my throat!

It didn't choke me, I'm happy to say:
  Love's silence is sweeter than speech;
For hours your head on my bosom lay,
  As we lazily neared the beach.

MUSIC.

When first the world from shapeless chaos sprang,
  Rapturous Music filled the yielding air;
The stars of the young morn together sang,
  For light, and life, and love were ev'rywhere!
And floating downward from Creation's birth
It with its melody fills all the earth.
'Tis the soul of Poetry and the voice of Love,
  Baptizing Worship with its spirit light;
Through all Nature its sweet enchantments move,
  And most seductive in the sleeping night.
It murmurs in the leaves, it gurgles in the rill,
  And Hatred flees, and Slander stops her tongue;
  It drops into the soul the notes of song,
And whispers to the surging waves, "Be still!"

I HAVE OFTEN WATCHED HER.

I HAVE often watched her
When she knew that I was nigh;
I have seen her white hands tremble,
And I have heard her sigh.

She does not say I must depart—
Yet asks me not to stay;
And if, perchance, her glance meets mine,
She turns her head away.

She e'er selects the songs I love,
The books of which I speak;
A thoughtless word from me will bring
A tear-drop to her cheek.

Her voice is sweet. It vexes me
That she so rarely talks;
Yet, 'tis that silence makes the heav'n
Around our moonlight walks.

I have not told her of my love—
I know not if I dare;
She seems by far too good for me,
And too divinely fair.

I know not whether she loves me,
Or hopes to be my wife;
I only know that she is all
My happiness in life.

SUMMER NIGHT.

With whispers any heart would trust,
With loving hand, the wind doth thrust
The curtain folds away,
So waiting ear might better hear
What willing lips may say.
Upon the floor like silver flakes,
Or blossoms that the South wind shakes,
The noiseless moonbeams fall;
While on the sky all over lie,
Like beads the nun-like moon hath dropped,
The stars; and bars
Of darker clouds the light ones stay
That else would drift serene away.

The sash around, above, below,
In curls a belle would love to throw
Back from her snowy brow,
The ambitious vine doth climb;
And more aspiring yet, and bold,
Of lightning-rod it taketh hold,
And, mounting to the very eaves,
Looks down upon the train it leaves!
Of trust, how sweet
An emblem meet!
Its love in green festoons it shrouds,
The route of lightning from the clouds!

So calm and still is every thing,
The brooklet doth not care to sing;
  But starts a strain, then stops again,
Like one would strike the soft guitar
When thought is with a heart afar.
Laggard on the air the thistle floats,
Upon the moon the night-owl gloats;
  The dog on guard within the yard
In thrilling dreams of chase is lost—
A sentinel asleep upon his post!

Amid the gently-falling light,
Amid the grandeur of the night,
  I softly tread. Around my head,
And shutting half my form from view,
The curtains hang; and, looking through,
  My heart doth beat like the feet
Of children patt'ring on the leaves—
While within my inner life there breathes
  A gentle prayer for watchful care,
And all the Lord hath done for me.

Ah! rather by that window would I be
Than in courts of "Kingdoms by the Sea!"
  My heart is here: and only where
The heart is found can pleasure dwell.
An adulating tongue might tell
Of pomp and power; and flattery kneel
To worship, when it did not feel;
  But heart would sigh again to fly
Where would fall upon the ear
The breathings of the loved ones near.

MY TROUBADOUR.

One ev'ning beside my window
In moodiness sat I;
Had ev'rything gone wrong that day?
What was it made me sigh?

Then came from out the lilac-bush
Sweetest song I e'er heard;
I rose, and was surprised to find
My troubadour a bird!

It gave me faith, that trilling song,
It was so free and glad;
I looked to God with clearer eyes,
And felt no longer sad.

THE BLOSSOMS WERE CROWNING THE HEDGES.

The blossoms were crowning the hedges,
The skies glowed serene in the west,
When you gave me those sweet, sweet pledges
That made me so thoroughly blest.

I think of those vows sweet and tender,
I think of those whispers of love,
I think of those eyes that in splendor
Shone down, like the stars from above.

The next thing to thinking is dreaming;
So I dream of thee in my sleep,
And wake from the witch'ry of seeming
At one tender name that I speak.

ALLIE FAY.

Like an angel she is seeming,
Fit to mingle with our dreaming,
In the twilight shadows stealing,
Now so softly, sweetly kneeling
Down to pray;
With her ringlets brightly streaming,
From her ivory forehead gleaming,
On her snowy neck reclining,
Half cajoling, half repining—
Allie Fay!

One could worship without sinning
Eyes like hers, so bright and winning,
Like diamonds in their glancing,
More bewitching and entrancing—
'Tis their way!

Her heart is constant in its loving—
Never, like her footsteps, roving;
And her mien so sweet, impressing,
None can pass without caressing,
Allie Fay!

No faint smiles are doubt betraying
As you listen to me saying,
In a cloud-isle tipped with gold
Did eyes of Allie first behold
Light of day!
And young and white-winged angels
Poured out their sweet evangels,
Came with melodious singing,
Came to greet her life's beginning—
Allie Fay!

OUT IN THE SNOW.

But few tears will be shed
For the woman found dead
In that white, frozen bed,
Out in the snow!
Blinding flakes fill the air:
How the stony eyes stare
Through the damp, draggled hair,
Out in the snow!

Did she moan, did she weep,
In that stillness of sleep,

In the white drifts so deep,
Out in the snow?
There's a babe on her breast!
It has gone to its rest,
O how supremely blest!
Out in the snow!

Ah! God knows what right is,
Though dreary the night is,
And touching the sight is,
Out in the snow!
No more will she borrow
Faint hope from the morrow,
Nor sigh in her sorrow,
Out in the snow!

PENITENT.

In the twilight I am calling,
Lord, to thee, in earnest prayer;
Darker than the shadows falling
Is my heart, in its despair.

Ever sinning, ever erring,
Wayward to my trust and thee!
Heart its duties oft deferring,
Hard as any heart can be!

Now each secret fault confessing,
Deed and word and thought of sin,
Grant, O Lord, thy promised blessing,
Grace to bear and peace within!

Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure and boundless love thou art!
Crown me now with thy salvation,
Enter now this waiting heart!

THE OLD WORLD WEDDED TO THE NEW.

Old ocean startles at the shout
That echo flings from hill to hill;
Genius has traced a brazen route
Within her heart, and she is still.

O'er yawning steeps and hidden deeps,
In many leagues the cable lies,
And thought electric o'er it leaps—
The lightning wrested from the skies!

Triumphs won and triumphs surmised,
Shine dimly in this grand eclipse;
And Progress stands, herself surprised,
With finger pressed upon her lips!

Together sing, ye Stars of Morn!
Break out in thrilling song anew,
To greet the swelling cry upborne—
"The Old World wedded to the New!"

THE LOST SOUL.

Lost! lost! lost!
Far beyond a hope or prayer,
Upon the beach of its despair!
A soul from out the realms of mind,
By God created and designed!

Lost! lost! lost!
From the sweetest joys of heaven,
From the life that God hath given!
Afloat upon a trackless sea—
Lost, lost, to all Eternity!

Lost! lost! lost!
The cry comes up, appalling, dread!
So full of terror and dismay
The very air doth shrink away!

Lost! lost! lost!
A wretched, yet deserved doom
More dark than thought of gaping tomb!
The very darkest life of woe
A soul accurst can ever know!

AT SEA.

At sea! Ah! thitherward the heart
With keen solicitude will turn;
With tears we see loved ones depart,
With smiles we welcome their return.

Yet life is but a dreary sea,
Eternity lines the further shore;
But listless followers are we
Of voyagers who've gone before.

Where is the haven of our rest?
And what beyond the moaning sea?
Are ours the prayers of the blest,
To reach into Eternity?

Prayers for strength, and faith, and love,
For ourselves and for our fellow-men;
And sailing by one star above,
The shining Star of Bethlehem!

MY BEAUTIFUL BELOVED.

ADRIFT upon a trackless sea,
No faith in things that are to be,
No guide, no compass, and no chart,
A more than Ishmael in heart,
Who entwined with gentle hands
Her soul with mine in silken bands?
And fill'd with hope the laggard sail,
The spirit pilot of the gale?
'Twas thou—my idolized, my own!
The light that glorifies my home,
My Beautiful Beloved!

I love thee; not that thou art fair
As maidens of Ionia are;
But because a life so pure as thine
Hath made mine own grow more divine
Because, led by thy spirit,
I see the joys we shall inherit.
No matter which may go before,
To tread yon dim, uncertain shore,
The one will for the other wait
Beside the ever-shining gate,
My Beautiful Beloved!

WHICH?

WITHOUT—the fountain's cheerful plash—
Within—a needle's tireless flash;
A bird perched on a swinging-bar,
Some gold-fish in a white-globe jar;
A bitter heart-pang, then a stitch!
Forgotten or forsaken? Which?

Ah! vows are sometimes light as air;
Men may be false and yet seem fair;
Some other dear one they caress,
And absence makes their love grow less;
She loops in fears with every stitch—
Forgotten or forsaken? Which?

A letter written but missent?
A ship with masts dismantled, bent?
A ling'rer near a dying friend?
Perhaps his own life near its end?
She loops excuses with each stitch—
Soon to return, or *never!* Which?

TALKING LETTERS.

I LOVE talking letters. Do letters talk?
They talk to me for hours. I fold them up
And put them away, but their chattiness
Is about me still. I dream waking dreams,
Such as oft have neither aim nor purpose,
Yet sweet to me the while. I am a child,
Touch'd by childish things? Well—may you ne'er long
To be once more as child-like as a child!

Such letters may say idle things idly;
They may mean little or they may mean much,
Just as you take them. They make you weep;
You know not why, nor do you care to know.
It is their enthusiasm that you love;
You feel that dreary years have left you still
Enough to send an answering echo back.
Their silent inspiration inspires you,
And their eloquence is the eloquence
Of sweet thoughts spoken sweetly—unstudied,
Yet running over with oratory!

They may tell of forest sanctuaries,
With leafy galleries and mossy aisles,
And starlit domes, beneath which saintly ghosts
Gather to worship in the gloaming;

Of music set for throats whose improvising
Makes you hold your breath, yet vexes you
With its fits and starts; of brooks that gossip,
And flowers that blush because they listen;
And so it is that you think summer thoughts,
And your heart is all the better for it!

I have such letters. A full score of them,
Tied with blue ribbon. I read them often,
And then about my hushed heart I feel
A pair of soft hands which push aside
The curtains of my vain forgetfulness,
And flood with a summer radiance the walls
On which are hung the portrait faces
Of the lost, the absent, and the dead!

And then a form, a girlish form, such as
Artists dream they see—mind, but *dream* they see—
Kneels beside the one lone tomb my soul
Contains. Ah! she is the young "mortality"
Of my ideal life; one who oft doth come
To renew the inscription on the stone—
Not with maul and chisel—but with tears!

I saw the hand that wrote these letters
Folded with its fellow o'er a pulseless breast,
Looking as if it were cut out of stone,
In its whiteness, and than stone more cold.
I mean to say that she is dead? I do—
And yet, when I read these letters, it seems
It *cannot* be! I hear her voice again;
I hear her agile tread again; I feel
Her hand in mine; I feel her lips touch mine;

I see a pair of blue eyes quick warming
Into gray; I speak to her, and these letters
Answer me! They make me feel both sad and glad;
Sad because she is no more, and glad
Because I shall surely see her by and by!

COME HOME!

Come Home!
The hours seem so wearisome!
The stars shone with a gentle glow
And June walked o'er the world below
When last we parted by the moaning sea;
And blushing June again is here:
Though but an absence of a year,
It seems like many, *many* years to me!

Come Home!
It is so sad to be alone!
I call thee in my restless sleep!
I often sit alone and weep
Tears briny as the waters of the sea;
I know my heart can never learn
To wait with patience thy return,
For thou art more than all the world to me!

Come Home!
Each wildly throbbing pulse says Come!
To kiss me once again, my love!
To call me thine again, my love!

I weary, waiting by the moaning sea!
I know that it is very wrong,
But still my heart will sometimes long
At rest within the voiceless grave to be!

IN THE EMPTY CHURCH.

FAINTLY sad heart fluttered,
Faintly white lips muttered,
While through the windows, wide, unshuttered,
A stream of sunlight, amber sifted,
Fell and drifted—
Enveloping the altar
And prayer-book and psalter,
And the high white brow uplifted.

In the solemn stillness,
In the death-like chillness,
With face white from weeks of illness,
She humbly knelt. While no word spoken
Gave sign or token
Of the great grief she felt—
The grief, the sorrow, that on the morrow
Might leave her poor heart broken!

The morrow! By that altar,
That prayer-book and psalter,
Too richly blest to falter,

Another, his white-veiled bride would stand!
While at diamond dresses trailing,
And the organ's solemn wailing,
Or sudden crash of thunder,
The crowd would gape and wonder,
And the bridegroom blush and blunder,
As he took the snow-white hand!

Lonely and neglected,
Forsaken and rejected,
Not strange that she knelt dejected—
Knelt with face uplifted,
Where the sunlight, amber sifted,
Fell and drifted;
Or with hands at aching head,
Half unconscious in her dread,
Wished that she were dead!

THE DEAD HEART.

LIKE shrouds seem to you the curtains of lace,
And the mirrors mock at your faded face,
And the carpets seem but like frozen sleet
As they hush the tread of your tired feet.

Your hands are nervous and your lips are white,
And you toss and moan in the dreary night;
And at dawn you walk with a queenly tread
Through the marble halls—but your heart is dead!

A solemn rite—but a farcical vow,
And a coronet gilded your aching brow!
"A duchess is she!" from lip to lip flew:
"A skeleton Bride is she!" said you.

Titles are paltry—and gold is but dross—
And the loss of love is a fearful loss!
Slowly, drop by drop, the wasted heart bleeds,
With nothing to answer its thousand needs!

Ah! let not your eyes in their envy gloat,
Or your wan hands catch at your choking throat,
When you see Reuben's loaded wain go by,
A smile on his lips and a flash in his eye,

As he chats with Madge on the new-mown hay,
Happier than a queen this many a day!
The Duke had money—the yeoman had none:
So the poor man lost and the rich man won.

Reuben's hurt heart felt a wild throb of pain,
But he outlived that, and he loved again;
Pretty Madge is all that is loving and true,
And he ne'er has time for a thought of you!

The folly was yours, and so was the sin;
What matters it now if "it might have been!"
Your heart—it is dead, and gold—is but dross,
And the loss of love is a fearful loss!

SOFT RAIN.

I LISTEN, soft rain,
As thy drops beat against the pane;
Dost come, with meaning voice of thine,
To braid thy locks of mist with mine?

Kiss my lips, soft rain!
And cheek, and brow, and lips again!
Often and long, with flow of tears,
As though we were to part for years!

I am sad, soft rain!
So call me sister now, by name!
I, too, could weep my heart away
That others might grow strong to-day!

So soon gone, soft rain?
Thy mists rolled up in sheets of flame!
The sun has wiped thy tears away—
So it shall mine, this weary day!

FROM GRAHAM'S CABINET OF KISSES.

Press kisses on my brow, Margery!
They drink the shooting pains away,
They make my soul grow strong to-day!

Press kisses on my lips, Margery!
My soul like mellow music notes
To lands of sunny visions floats!

In thy soft arms, my Margery,
I seem like one dead! And yet, O bliss!
In rapture give back kiss for kiss!

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